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ABSTRACT

This guide to the use of information reviews the development of Kansas Project Communicate from 1972-1976, and the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) computerized information service (KEDDS), which serves as the resource component of the information dissemination system. KEDDS (Kansas Educational Dissemination Diffusion system) is financed by an NIE grant. It includes a project director; an expanded information resource base utilizing ten resource centers; and field consultants who link the KSDE regional centers with local schools. Also presented are guides on search negotiation, search delivery, and search evaluation. (AP)

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KEDDS (Resource Component) Manual

Guide To The Use of Information

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INFORMATION DISSEMINATION

The 1976 Report of the Interstate Project on Dissemination (IPOD) concluded that

> **Usage now appears to have established two concepts of dissemination. In the narrower sense, dissemination has been limited to the traditional, one-way flow of information concept. Dissemination activities developed by those holding this view have been perceived as primarily designed to create awareness of and interest in new programs and products. In its broader sense, dissemination has been used to include activities usually associated with diffusion and implementation of new practices — such as providing technical assistance, with emphasis on developing two-way communication.**

DISSEMINATION DEFINED

The IPOD report also included a definition of dissemination determined by the Dissemination Resources Group, National Institute of Education, as they considered descriptive concepts for the State Dissemination Grants Program:

Dissemination is a two-way sharing process

1. **For communicating educational needs and problems among educational practitioners, policy makers, and knowledge producers;**

and

2. **For facilitating rational consideration and the appropriate utilization of the outcomes of research, development, effective educational practice and other knowledge that can be used for the improvement of education.**

CCSSO
RESOLUTION
ON DISSEMINATION

The following is a recent (November, 1975) resolution on Dissemination which was passed by the full complement of the Council of Chief State School Officers:

> **Dissemination is a major state education agency function. The Council urges each chief state school officer to promote a coordinated, integrated dissemination system within each agency. In support of state efforts, the Council urges federal education agencies to reduce the frequency with which federal regulations and guidelines fragment dissemination. The Council advocates collaborative action of state and federal agencies to establish a nationwide system for sharing educational knowledge.**

INTRODUCTION

The Resource System of the new Kansas Educational Dissemination Diffusion System (KEDDS) has added dimensions and acquired a certain sophistication since it started as a computerized information service in the Kansas State Department of Education, five years ago.

Kansas/Project Communicate was one of approximately a dozen information dissemination projects initiated in State Education Agencies in the early 1970's. Funded initially by grants from the U. S. Office of Education, the projects were a part of a program designed as a cooperative effort of the federal government and SEA's to test a way of helping improve access to knowledge resources by local school personnel.

The two major components of the information service projects sponsored by the State Dissemination Program were a retrieval center in the state education agency and a linkage unit which provided liaison of the central services with local educators.

Four of the earlier state dissemination projects, including Communicate, provided linkage by educational field agents on their staffs:

Field Agents
called on local schools
negotiated information requests from school clients
delivered information back to the clients

They were the conveyors and interpreters of alternative program information from which school clients could make decisions concerning potential improvements.

Computerization of the retrieval component was a mandate of the Pilot State Dissemination Program. Projects primarily retrieved information from **Research In Education** files of the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) and **Current Index to Journals In Education**, coordinated by ERIC.

The State dissemination projects, including Communicate, continued to be financed and supervised by the Office of Education until mid-1973 when responsibility for the ERIC system and the State Dissemination Program was transferred to the newly implemented National Institute of Education (NIE).

PROJECT COMMUNICATE

During the period 1972-73, Project Communicate service (receiving requests, responsive computerized searching, processing information, providing documents, client follow-up) was performed for thirteen pilot school districts and staff of the KSDE*, by a staff of seven persons, including two full-time and one part-time (project director) field agents. Although in-house and other localized resources were utilized, the major information response to clients was, and continues to be today, the ERIC system.

1973-74

The NIE Project Communicate continuation grant effective mid-1973 excluded the field agents. Project operation now required the training and utilization of "local linkers". Administrators of the client districts (expanded that year from 13 to 31) chose the linkers from district personnel. The linkers mailed their co-workers' information requests to the Project office at the KSDE.

1974-75

Beginning 1974-75, the NIE grant had expired. Project service was no longer free. Through a merger with another KSDE section, Communicate acquired a new title (Information Services and Retrieval**) and approval from the Kansas Legislature to sell packages of information by contract. Colleges, universities and educational cooperatives were included in the 115 client institutions as well as the individual school districts. Again local linkers received information requests and mailed them to the Project.

1975-76

At the beginning of the 1975-76 year, eight colleges and universities and one educational cooperative agreed to serve as regional resource centers. Staff members in the regional centers were trained as information specialists who retrieved information for their students and faculties.

Two years after the field agents had been dropped, the Communicate director concluded that pilot district staff members who had been served by field agents showed more "support" and "staying power" toward the information service than those districts served by local linkers.

The diversity of the past activities and experiences of Communicate (particularly use of field agents) proved valuable as the new KEDDS Resource Component was developed to serve local Kansas educators, beginning the 1976-1977 school year.

* serving the KSDE staff was an ongoing function
** for clarity, the service will be referred to as Communicate

KEDDS COMMUNICATE
(the Resource Component)

The goal of the Resource Component is to collect in a central place the information and knowledge available, concerning research, consultant help, successful practices, validated programs, and other information the users need in assisting them in making decisions regarding improvement of learning.

Financed by an NIE State Dissemination Cepacity Building grant, KEDDS Communicate includes the Resource Component director; an expanded information resource base, utilizing ten regional resource centers; and field consultants who link the KSDE and regional centers' staffs with the local schools.

DIRECTOR

The director of the Resource component, who operates from the KSDE-based center, participates in management decisions concerning the total Kansas Education Dissemination/Diffusion System; supervises the preparation and maintenance of the various Kansas-based information files; coordinates the responsibilities of the regional resource centers, including the retrieval of batch searches submitted by the centers to the computer; and shares in the training and planning for subsequent operations of the KEDDS field consultants (LINKers).

INFORMATION RESOURCES

Regional Centers — By 1975, efforts to expand information services with a limited staff, caused Communicate to seek outside assistance in conducting information searches. Initially, the director solicited and received commitments from eight colleges and universities and one educational cooperative to serve as regional resource centers. Supported by an NIE Special Purpose State Dissemination grant, information retrieval personnel in the regional centers were trained in request negotiation and search strategy at workshops coordinated by the Communicate staff and instructed by consultants experienced in computerized information searching. The regional information specialists provide the mechanics for submitting information searches, instigated by the field consultants, to ERIC and other national information systems.

Information Files — All information files with the exception of ERIC and other national machine-based systems, are housed in the KSDE and searched manually at the present time:

- **KANSAS DOCUMENT (KD)**
  Proposed for potential state computer retrievability, the staff has logged and assigned accession numbers to several hundred documents from the KSDE library shelves.
  Abstracts for 100 KD's have been written in anticipation of keying them to computer tapes for searching and retrieval by the RIC batch search program already in use.
  Plans at this time are to include documents generated in all of the state agencies plus those educational documents retrieved by the KSDE staff, KEDDS field consultants, regional centers staff, faculties of Institutes of Higher Education, and local school personnel.

- **KANSAS PRACTICES/PROGRAMS/PROCESSES**
  Directory of Educational Promising Practices, Title III, ESEA, Innovative Program Section, KSDE (386 practices submitted by Kansas school teachers and administrators)
  Catalog of NIE Education Products (two volumes)
  Programs That Work (National Diffusion Network)
  Project Information Packages (PIP's), Title I, ESEA
  In progress is development of a file of local practices/programs/processes.

- **KANSAS HUMAN RESOURCES**
  In progress is development of a file of local people available to assist schools (staffs in KSDE, colleges and universities and others with abilities to help schools with specific problems).

- **KANSAS READY REFERENCES**
  A file of individual pieces of generalized information available for rapid retrieval, (e.g., directories, newsletters, etc.)

The KSDE center resources staff responds to requests by continuing development and maintenance of the above information files for manual searching and coordinating information search requests from the regional centers.

The proposal from the KSDE to the NIE for a 1976 State Dissemination Grant summed up the potential impact of information services:

> "...literature searches should make clients aware of alternative practices, programs, processes; to provide an entry point to the client for the field consultant; to introduce clients to the Resource System, including regional centers; provide up-to-date information and an array of alternatives".

FIELD CONSULTANTS (LINKers)

A contingent of field consultants provide linkage for KEDDS COMMUNICATE as told in the KSDE proposal to NIE, "...the role by the field consultant...places less emphasis on readying the system for change and more emphasis on acquiring resources and helping with particular innovations...Havelock defines the consultant as "facilitator, helper, objective observer, and specialist in how to diagnose needs, how to identify resources, and how to retrieve from expert resources."

However, the function of the field consultants (including brief descriptions of the field agent role in general), relative to the use of the Resource Component, are viewed through the experiences of Project Communicate field agents and a present KEDDS LINK field consultant, as well as the literature concerned with the processes of request negotiation, search delivery, and evaluation.

The Value of Conveying Information

A former Project Communicate field agent, Jayanne Angell, expressed the value of using comprehensive information as a basis for education decision making, saying, "Quality information aids in implementing new programs and procedures when helpful and to reject fads and ideas that are not educationally sound...All children in Kansas deserve to be taught by up to date information."

Sam Sieber, who conducted a formative evaluation of the three state projects developed by the Pilot States Dissemination Program, in 1976, described the advantages to field agents in supplying information to schools:

> ...conveying information is necessary for the performance of other, more active roles because it legitimizes the agent in the eyes of local educators. In essence it helps him to gain credibility and entree to the local school by disassociating him from the image of a substantive expert who is somehow superior to clients...Once an extension agent gained personal acceptance and demonstrated a grasp of the materials that were delivered to the client, he became attractive as a collaborator in change.

QUESTION NEGOTIATION

The crux of the client satisfaction with retrieved information may lie in the communication between the client and field consultant during the request negotiation process.

Bonnie Campbell, former Project Communicate information specialist, thought that each client (ideally) should tap all of the available in-house and local resources related to the request. She emphasized that "there must be specificity in writing up requests."

Sieber, (1976) again from experiences as pilot state information services evaluator, said that "the problem of communicating the clients' needs to the retrieval staff emerged as one of the toughest of all; and in a large minority of cases, the information delivered to the client was viewed as not relevant to my problem or need."

On the other hand, the irrelevant information was not, perhaps, the lack of communication or understanding by the field consultant. Linda McNeely now a KEDDS LINKer, was formerly a field agent for the Northwest Kansas Educational Cooperative (serving 25 school districts). Since the cooperative served as a regional resource center, she worked with Communicate as an information specialist. This experienced field agent presents this viewpoint:

"Many times, it is necessary to deliver the information relevant to what the client **perceives** his needs to be in order to help him realize what in actuality his needs are.

"For instance, a teacher perceives her problem to be of a disciplinary nature so she requests a search on techniques of discipline. More damage would be incurred at this point if the field consultant tried to negotiate a different type of request (i.e., alternative programs, activities, etc.).

"It is better," the field consultant believes, "to go ahead and retrieve the information on discipline techniques and let the client view the information delivered as not relevant to his problem or need. At this point, then, a different search can be negotiated."

To assist the field consultant in communicating with the client about kinds and amounts of information, some key questions were developed by Nancy Flott, Information Specialist for three years, now director of KEDDS Communicate.

WHAT IS THE QUESTION?
(A guide for search negotiation)

Probably the most vital part of searching a data base is wording the question so as to obtain the information desired. As an intermediary between the client and the computer, the negotiator will need to be skillful in questioning the client so as to clearly define his/her needs. Some clients may not be aware of the **real** need, but through proper questioning, both the client and the negotiator can discover an appropriate way to express the search request.

The negotiator, to be really effective, will need to be knowledgeable in the field to be searched, as well as skillful in inquiry techniques.

Some key questions which might be used as guidelines during the inquiry interview might be:

1. What does the client want? AND what **doesn't** he/she want? (possibly equally important!) Are there "maybes", alternatives or fringe areas that should be included?
2. What type of information does he/she want? Curriculum guides? Reserach projects? Programs? Speeches? Journal articles? Bibliographies?
3. How much material does he/she want? Is it an awareness search? An in-depth search? What source has he/she already investigated?
4. What is the role of the client? His/her position? His/her responsibilities? Will this influence your search strategy?
5. Is it a "state of the art" search? Or retrospective?
6. Is there an age group, grade level or specific type of person to be considered in this search? Would it be better to "not" out the unwanted groups or levels?
7. How will the information be used? Why does he/she need it?
8. When is the information needed?
9. Does he/she know authorities in the field — names, institutions, organizations, actual projects (by name)?
10. Have you listened carefully and kept your own personal biases out?

Some searches will come to you as the negotiator without face-to-face interaction. You will need to be cautious when interpreting information that is in written form.

A few hints for "search by mail" are:

1. Encourage clients to write out their needs in paragraph form. It is very difficult to group a list of terms, but easy to identify key concepts by underlining words in paragraphs.
2. Encourage clients to be specific and be sure to include limitations.
3. Renegotiate by phone if there is any question about the search.
4. Carefully review the search results to be sure they are relevant. Highlight pertinent abstracts.
5. Conduct a follow-up evaluation and renegotiate and research if necessary.
6. Maintain good rapport with regular and potential clients to make negotiation both by mail and in person, easier and quicker.

Field consultant Linda McNeely reiterates that the "negotiator must be careful and sensitive in the approach used to make a client aware of his **real** need. Many times, it is more profitable for the negotiator to "shut up" i.e., forget the proper questioning skills and deliver the information. This way, the client may realize the real need."

In recommending the above approach to the question negotiation role facet, Linda McNeely provided illustration of the diverse ways a field consultant may handle his/her role.

Compatibly, the training manual for field agents developed by Stanford University and System Development Corporation (SDC) determines that within the linkage framework there are varying methods in role function used by different field agents, linkage stating that "the variations will reflect...differences in the personal styles of individual agents, and differences in the geographic areas and the clientele served..."

In a presentation on the National Diffusion Network (NDN) to the 1976 National Dissemination Conference, Jean Narayanan — Chief of the dissemination staff, Bureau of School System, U. S. Office of Education, said "All State Facilitators promote rational choice among proven educational alternatives and help bring the LEA with a need together with an LEA with a solution. A given Facilitator's strategies reflect both the needs of the area served and the talents of the SF staff...Some facilitators play a major role in developing LEA needs assessment, consensus building and organizational development skills...Other play more passive roles..."

SEARCH DELIVERY

As in other facets of field consultant service, delivering the information search to the client may be performed in individual ways. Experiences of Project Communicate field agents established that delivering searches in person was effective, and that in preparation, the agent should

1. screen results of all searches
2. assess searches for relevance of information
3. Explain at time of delivery any bibliographic entries and how to order further information (e.g., how to order ERIC documents/articles)

In screening searches, the consultant may decide to take only that information he considers relevant or may take it all and identify for the client the documents that he/she recommends.

As they assess the search results, the agents should be cognizant of current trends in education, the services of outside consultants, and the results of projects/programs that could be applied in particular situations.

Explaining the bibliographic entries definitely is necessary for a new client who may not be familiar with any of the aspects of requesting and receiving information services.

The personal contact in delivering searches also can be used to offer assistance in interpreting information and continuing the relationship, i.e., to determine client satisfaction; to introduce the client to a consultant or to develop strategies for assisting with utilization of the information.

Further involvement with the client should be achieved on a periodic basis, if possible. For example, Jayanne Angell believed that the field agent should be available every two or three weeks "to insure sustained client service."

And among staff members of a small Kansas school district, interviewed as to the impact of field agent services, personal visits were regarded as beneficial to the utilization of Project services.

Those interviewed thought the face-to-face aspect definitely provided impetus to a continuing relationship. As an illustration, a teacher who had used the service frequently in developing an improved language art program, appreciated the personal contact in negotiating an information search, saying that "two heads are better than one in limiting a subject category."

The high school principal in the rural district noted that Project services had been available for sometime, that teachers could use it on their own (mail in a search), but that the field agent's visits appeared to stimulate use of the service.

During these visits and depending in what phase the various clients and the field agents were involved (some negotiating their first search, others ready for implementation of a program), the agent had to be ready to offer further help — either his own or outside assistance.

Project Communicate field agents frequently recommended outside consultants to clients for specialized implementation assistance beyond their particular skills. In addition, they (the rural agent particularly) were active in locating financial sources that school staff members sometimes did not realize were available (full grants, matching funds) and all types of outside resources (filmstrips, audio-visual aids, "fugitive" literature).

SEARCH EVALUATION

How did the retrieved information suit the needs of the client? Did the clients, or not, utilize the information? If so, to what extent? If not, why not?

The KEDS field consultants will evaluate both their performances and that of the Resource system for each client by reviewing the goals and objectives of both KEDDS/LINK and KEDDS/Communicate to determine specific objectives and the scope of each objective. Instruments will be developed by an outside evaluator* to evaluate each objective. The instruments will be administered via mail, personal contact, or other means. Collected data will be tabulated and analyzed and a final report of all analyses plus an executive summary will be provided by the outside evaluator. This evaluation procedure will provide an effective method for studying the change process, as well as for monitoring the activities of the project, including utilization of information from the Resource Component.

*Larry Havlicek, University of Kansas

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